

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Governor Jon S. Corzine in Newark, New Jersey

November 1, 2009

The President. How's it going, New Jersey? Thank you. Thank you. Yes we can!

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. Thank you. It's good to be back in Jersey. I told you I was coming back. You can't keep me away. And that's because that we're just 2 days away from giving 4 more years to my good friend and your Governor, Jon Corzine.

We've got some other outstanding public servants in the house. I just want to mention them: a trifecta of outstanding Members of Congress—Donald Payne, Frank Pallone, Bill Pascrell, and Steve Rothman—I actually have four of them. The—one of the finest mayors not just in New Jersey, but all throughout the country, Cory Booker's in the house. Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo is in the house. And Jon Corzine's partner who's going to help lead this State to 4 outstanding years of additional prosperity, Loretta Weinberg is in the house.

Now, look, at this point in the campaign, you've heard all the arguments. You've seen all the ads. In fact, you're tired of all the ads. [*Laughter*] You know that Jon Corzine's running for reelection. You know that the other guy doesn't seem to have a very proactive agenda other than going after Jon. You know that it's a tough time for New Jersey and it's a tough time for America. I don't have to tell you that. You see it in your own lives, you see it here in Newark, you see it all around the country: too many folks out of work, too many hard-working families who are seeing their costs of everything go up and seeing their wages shrink, their hours reduced.

You've got men and women who've been working all their lives, working hard, and somehow they're worried about whether they can retire with dignity and respect. They're worried about whether they can send their kids to college. They're wondering whether they can be the kind of providers, the kind of husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, they hope to be because of economic factors out of their control.

Audience members. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back. But I've got an important message here. But listen up, listen up. You know, when you've got seniors worried about retirement, you got young people worried about their ability to pay for college, you know these are challenging times, and so you want somebody who is in politics for the right reason.

Jon Corzine's in politics for the right reason. He knows folks are hurting. But here's what I know: For the past 4 years, you've had an honorable man, a decent man, an honest man at the helm of this State during extraordinary times. You've had a leader who's put the interests of hard-working New Jersey families ahead of self-interest and ahead of politics. He's fought for what matters to ordinary folks. That's the kind of Governor Jon Corzine has been, and if everybody in this auditorium works hard in the next 2 days, that's the kind of Governor he's going to be for another 4 more years.

Let's look at the record. Don't worry about all that political nonsense that's out there, all the negative ads. Let's look at the record. There's a tendency among politicians to distort their

opponent's record in the heat of the campaign. We understand that. Jon's a tough guy. But let's look at the record. Jon Corzine is a Governor who's provided more property tax relief than any Governor in New Jersey's history. He's the first Governor in 60 years who's actually reduced the size of government in this State.

Now, so when you hear the other side talking about how Jon Corzine's a tax-and-spend Democrat and all that stuff, just look at the record. He's done what they couldn't do, and what they didn't do. But here's what's important, and Cory Booker will testify, he—folks here in Newark will testify. He has been prudent with your taxpayer dollars, but he's protected the things that matter the most.

Here's a guy who's stood up when they wanted to cut education. Jon Corzine stood up. Corzine expanded early childhood education for more than 5,000 children. He understood pre-K isn't babysitting, it's a pathway to success for our young people. That's the kind of Governor you need.

At a time when the other guy doesn't have too much to say about health care, Jon Corzine, under his leadership, saw the Children's Health Insurance Program expand by nearly 100,000 more kids. Think about that, a hundred thousand kids who got health insurance because of the work of this Governor and his partners.

Jon Corzine's looking towards the future. And so he's made New Jersey a clean-energy leader because he knows that's where the jobs are going to come from, jobs that can't be outsourced, that pay a good wage. Working families can spend time with a newborn baby or a sick loved one because of paid sick leave signed into law by Jon Corzine.

When it comes to the issues that matter most—the issue of jobs—Corzine was at the forefront. He worked with me to develop the Recovery Act. He was the first Governor in the country to pass a recovery plan to get this State's economy moving again. Listening to Jon's opponent, you'd think New Jersey was the only State going through a tough time right now. I have something to report. We had the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. By the way, that didn't start under Jon's watch. That didn't start under my watch. I wasn't sworn in yet.

You got a little bit of revisionist history, a little selective memory going on, a little amnesia about how we got into this mess. This crisis that we are digging ourselves out of came about because of the same theories, the same lax regulation, the same trickle-down economics that the other guy's party's been peddling for years.

And you know, look, we're not interested in relitigating the past here, and I'm more than happy to go ahead and do the work that's required to get this economy moving again. I think about it every day. Jon Corzine thinks about it every day. Essentially, we don't mind cleaning up after somebody else's mess.

Now, the one thing I'd say, though, is, if I've got the mop and I'm cleaning up after that mess, and Jon's got the mop and he's cleaning up after somebody else's mess, the least these other folks can do is not stand there and say, "You're not holding the mop the right way. You're not mopping fast enough. You're using a socialist mop." Let me tell you something, just pick up a mop. Let's help clean up this country and make it work for ordinary people right here in New Jersey.

We don't need politicians who are more interested in scoring points than solving problems. We don't need politicians who are offering the same half-baked approaches that got

us into this mess in the first place. We don't need politicians who would rather stand on the sidelines and point fingers instead of offering answers and solutions. What we need are leaders who are committed to moving this country forward, who are committed to moving New Jersey forward, who've got your interests in mind. And that's who Jon Corzine is, and that's why he deserves another 4 years as Governor of New Jersey.

Let me say this: I know this man. When I was running for the United States Senate, before anybody knew my name, Jon Corzine offered his support. I served with him in the United States Senate, where I learned about his service as a United States marine. I learned about how he worked his way up from a middle class family and wants to make sure every American has the same ladders to opportunity that he had.

He partnered with me in developing our Recovery Act so that we gave New Jersey the kind of help it needed during the downturn, making sure that all across America, but right here as well, we prevented police officers and firefighters and teachers from being laid off. We made sure unemployment insurance was available to hundreds of thousands of folks here in New Jersey. We made health insurance, through COBRA, available for those folks who had lost their jobs so they wouldn't have to worry about their families' well-being. We gave a middle class tax cut to 3 million folks right here in New Jersey.

Those are the kind of changes we brought about. That's what Jon Corzine's committed to. But we also understand that our work is not yet done. Our work is not yet done. We are digging ourselves out of a hole, and we've begun to pull ourselves back from the brink. We just found out the economy's growing again, and that means that people pretty soon are going to start seeing jobs again.

But we've got a long way to go. We are not going to rest until we make sure that everybody who wants a job can find a job that pays a living wage. We're not going to rest until we make sure every child in New Jersey and all across America gets a world-class education from the day that they walk into preschool to the day they graduate from college. We will not rest until we've got health care reform in America, because we don't want families to be bankrupt when they get sick. We are not going to rest until we've got a clean-energy economy that helps free ourselves from dependence on foreign oil. We know how much work has to be done. You know how much work has to be done. And here's the question—is, how do we respond at this moment?

You know, last year when we had the election, everybody was excited, everything felt fresh and new, and we had a—we were going to turn the page. And because of you, because of your extraordinary efforts, because you believed, because you had confidence, because you knew that there was this gap between what America should be and what it was, and we could close that gap by working harder and working smarter and having a Government that was more transparent and more trustworthy, because of you, we succeeded at a time when nobody believed we could.

Now, I thank you for that: It wasn't because of me, it was because of you. But here's the thing. Here's the tough part. Here's the time when it's not as sexy, it's not as flashy. You know, this is when governing comes in, and we've got to make tough choices. And progress isn't always as quick as we want it. And we still got to negotiate with an intransigent opposition.

And after a while, people start feeling, "Well, gosh, I thought after we elected Obama, suddenly everything would be just fine, and suddenly kids would stop dropping out of school and everybody would be employed, chicken in every pot." [*Laughter*] Listen, I want you to

remember, when I ran for election, I did not say—[applause]—wait, wait, wait—when I ran for election, I did not say this was going to come overnight. I didn't say this was going to be easy. I didn't say you were going to be able to just put your feet up and turn on the TV and kind of watch everything magically get better.

Change is hard. People resist change. The special interests resist change. Jon Corzine, when he was elected Governor, he did not promise it was going to be easy. What he promised was that he would wake up every single day thinking about you. What he promised was that you'd have a government that was committed to making sure that families got a fair shot in life. What he promised was that he would be willing to take good ideas wherever they came from, including from the other party, as long as they improved the lives of New Jersey families.

And here's what I know, is that this guy has been working as hard as he promised. And so now the question is, how do you respond? We will not lose this election if all of you are as committed as you were last year. So I want everybody in this auditorium to make a pledge that in these next 48 hours, you will work just as hard for Jon as you worked for me. That you'll knock on just as many doors, that you'll make just as many phone calls, that you'll be calling your friends and your neighbors, your coworkers. You're going to be grabbing that—those relatives who don't vote all the time—Cousin Pookie, you're going to be calling him over—[laughter]—"Pook, you got to come vote, because your voice matters."

When Jon came out here, he asked if you were fired up. And I told this story about how I got—that story was actually from me traveling to South Carolina, and there was a city councilwoman there who, at a meeting that I was having at a time when my campaign was really just getting started and nobody knew who I was and nobody believed I could win, she looked at me, and she said, "Fired up!"

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. She said, "Ready to go!"

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. And even though there were only 20 people in the room, even though I was tired and had been rained on and didn't have any endorsements and the pundits in Washington were writing me off, something about her saying "fired up" got me fired up. Something about her saying "ready to go" got me ready to go.

And it goes to show how one voice can change a room. And if one voice can change a room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, it can change a State. And if it can change a State, it can change a nation. And if it can change a nation, it can change a world. Your voice can change the world. Your voice can change the world.

If you are out there working hard, if Newark votes like it voted last year, if New Jersey votes like it voted last year, if all those folks who had felt disenfranchised and felt forgotten are reminded of the incredible power of ordinary people, the ability to do extraordinary things, if you will let your voice shine through, then I guarantee that you will not only reelect Jon Corzine for 4 more years, but you are going to put New Jersey on a path for success for years to come. And I can't wait to see it, Newark.

I love you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:39 p.m. at the Prudential Center. In his remarks, he referred to State Senator Loretta Weinberg of New Jersey; New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Christopher J. Christie; and Edith Childs, city council member, Greenwood, SC.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Governor Jon S. Corzine, campaign rally in Newark, NJ.

Locations: Newark, NJ.

Names: Booker, Cory A.; Childs, Edith; Christie, Christopher J.; Corzine, Jon S.; DiVincenzo, Joseph N.; Pallone, Frank, Jr.; Pascrell, William J.; Payne, Donald M.; Rothman, Steven R.; Weinberg, Loretta.

Subjects: Economy, national : American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment insurance; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Energy : Foreign sources; Health and Human Services, Department of : State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP); Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Health insurance, protection of coverage; New Jersey : Democratic Party events; New Jersey : Early childhood education programs; New Jersey : Economy, strengthening efforts; New Jersey : Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies; New Jersey : Family medical leave benefits; New Jersey : Government programs, spending reductions; New Jersey : Governor; New Jersey : President's visits; New Jersey : Tax relief; Taxation : Tax relief.

DCPD Number: DCPD200900877.